

# **Online Personalised Academic Literacy Modules: The OPALMs Project at UTS**

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**'Critical Intersections: the 12th  
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Wollongong 25-27th November  
2015'**

# The story of two projects



# **It starts with: blended learning**

**Fast uptake at many universities**

**Can be effective for “time-poor” students – and academics**

**Delivery of content, support, resources**

**Face-to-face class time (high-touch experiences) for discussion & exploration of challenging ideas,**

**So...**

# The why, what & how of OPALMs

## Why:

Highly developed communication capabilities **fundamental** for engineers, IT professionals and scientists

Students with diverse levels of disciplinary literacy, from high to low

Limited opportunities in class to practise & develop these literacies

# Why What & how continued...

## **What:**

online modules to develop students' disciplinary literacy in large 1<sup>st</sup> year subjects in FEIT and Science

## **How:**

First project– (FYE grant 2014) for Engineering Communication & Communication for IT Professionals: modules comprising Word docs & external links

- academic style
- sentence structure
- paragraph structure
- vocabulary development
- synthesis of ideas
- paraphrasing & summarising



## Paragraphs

This module will discuss paragraphing.



## Vocabulary

This module will teach you about vocabulary.



## Academic Style

Enabled: Statistics Tracking

This short course introduces you to academic style writing and gives you a chance to practise how to write more academically. You can use this to assist you for your upcoming assignments. If you have any problems or have trouble use the version below (Academic Style: Alternate Version).



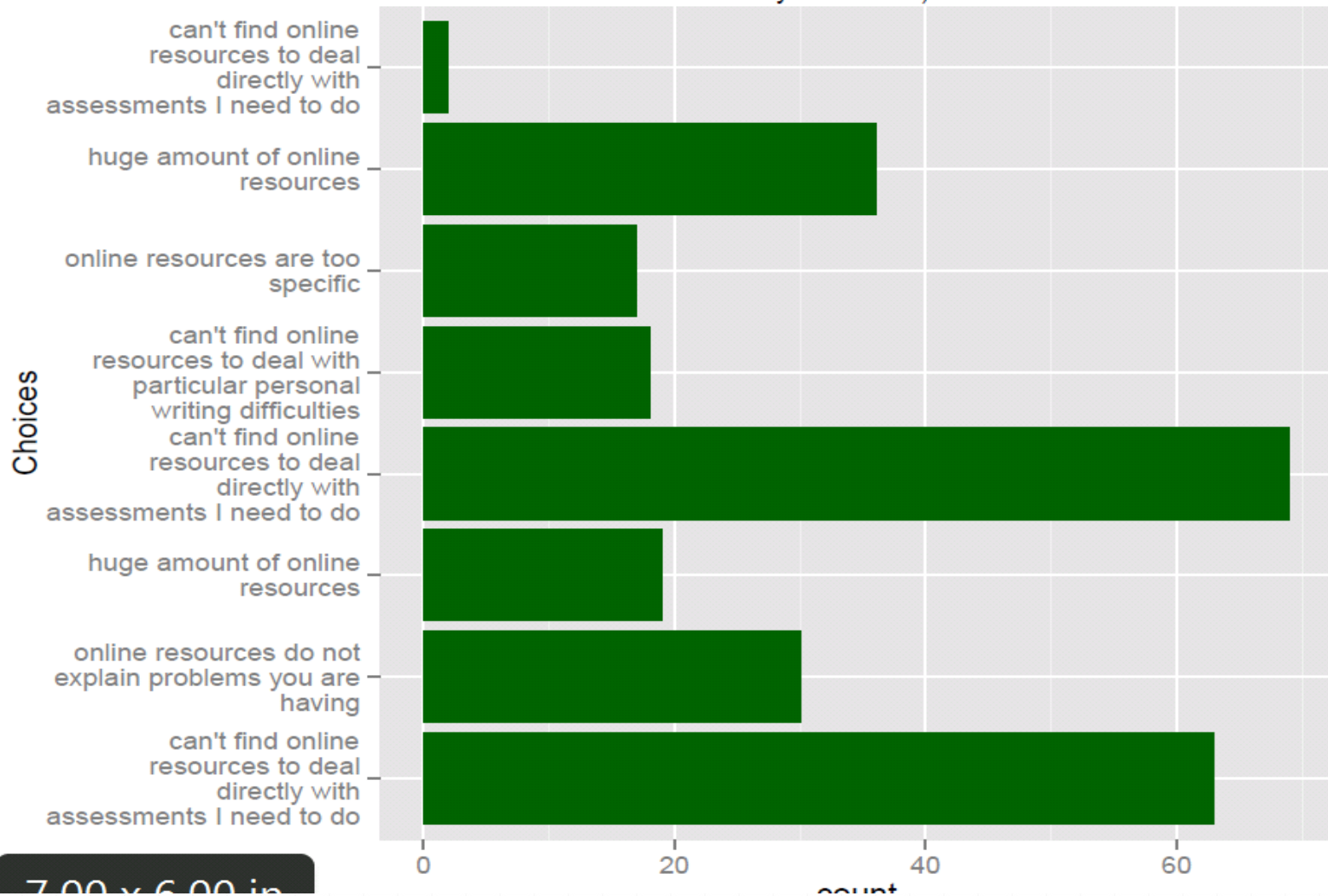
## Academic Style: Alternate Version

Enabled: Statistics Tracking

This version is in FLASH format. The version above may have problems with Google Chrome or Safari. If you have problems, then try this one.

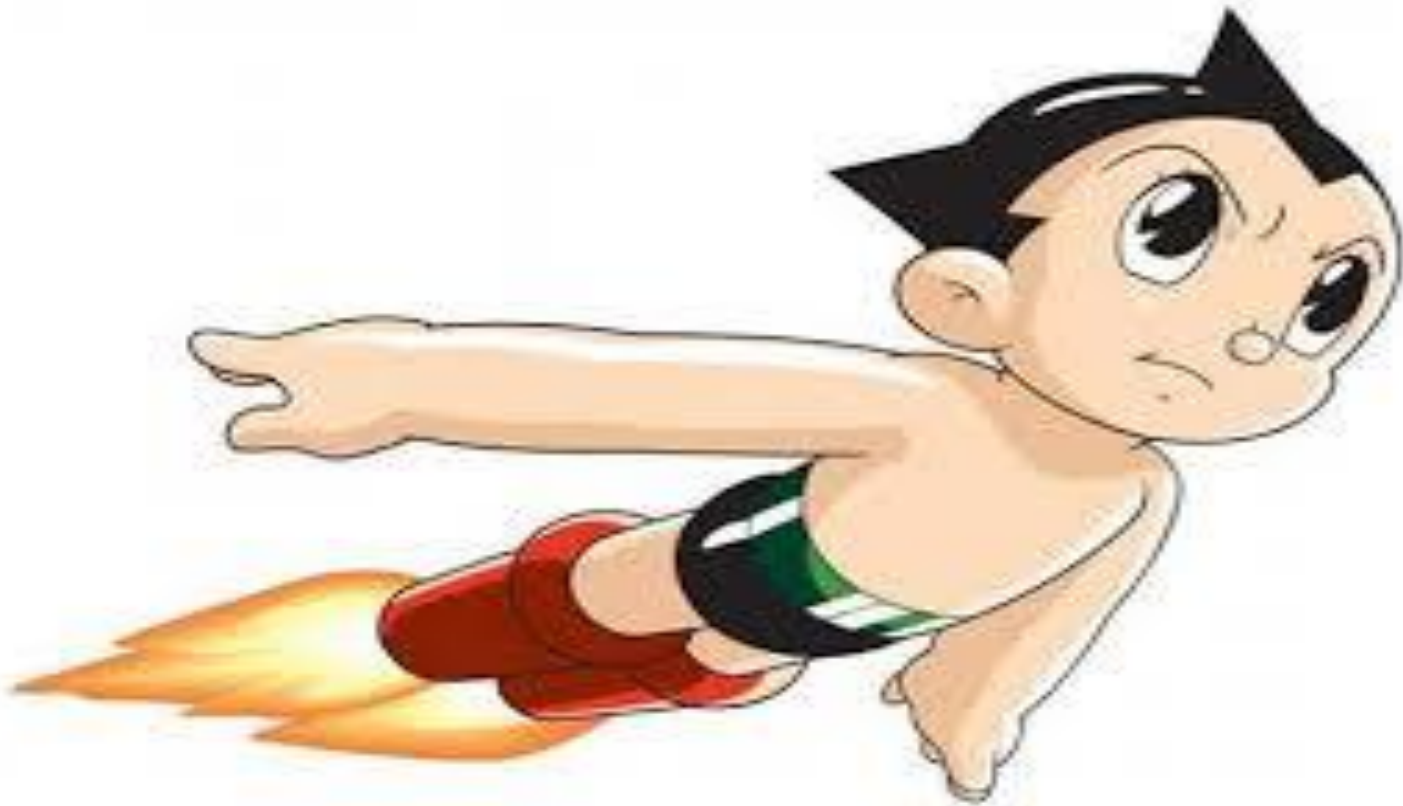
# Helped to curate online resources...

Have any particular PROBLEMS with online resources made it difficult for you to use them to improve your writing (Mark as many as apply to you or none):





**But not very exciting...**





# **So the 2<sup>nd</sup> project used Captive software...**

**We saw the Academic Integrity Module using  
Captive software developed for Science  
students at UTS (Yvonne Davila & Neela  
Griffiths)**

**We applied for VC's T&L and FYE grant:  
team project with FEIT & Science to develop  
modules applicable to both disciplines:**

**Academic style (completed)**

**Paraphrasing & summarising (in development)**

**Not everything went to  
plan...**



# What the module contains:

- Information about academic style
- Discipline-specific examples of informal and formal writing
- Interactive exercises with feedback

# What it looks like:

Captivate E-Learning Course - Google Chrome  
https://online.uts.edu.au/courses/1/48230/content/\_1239957\_1/multiscreen.html

## Developing Academic Style


Here is an example of how English can move from informal speech to formal writing. It uses extracts from comments and reports of a bridge collapse.

Click on each sentence to learn more.

Informal	Formal
It's terrible! I can't believe it! The bridge caved in and three blokes are gone.	The collapse of the bridge resulted in three fatalities.

What is Academic Style? **Developing Academic Style** Academic Features Changing to Academic Style Active & Passive Voice

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# How it works: UTSOnline > online resources



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Captivate  
module

# Demonstration...(may or may not connect)

[https://online.uts.edu.au/courses/1/48230/content/1239957\\_1/multiscreen.html](https://online.uts.edu.au/courses/1/48230/content/1239957_1/multiscreen.html)

# Student Evaluations

So far (evaluations ongoing)...Students value

- 24 hour availability
- *“Overall it was good in refining what I already knew, but not as a solo stand-alone model”* (focus group 1 Autumn 2015)
- Being able to apply concepts to their own writing
- Tutor guidance and input!
- *“They helped reinforce what I already learnt in class. I think class was the biggest help in improving my writing skills”* (focus group 1 Autumn 2015)



# Project Evaluation

Also ongoing, but...

Overall more time-consuming than expected

It took a **LONG** time to become familiar with Captivate software

The team was obliged to use Captivate (UTS licence and insufficient funds to purchase licence for different software)

Need to embed the modules more firmly into the subject teaching/learning activities

# Alternative software

Articulate Storyline 2 is another option

<https://en-au.articulate.com/products/storyline-why.php>

(on special NOW!)

Or ActivePresenter (heard about it 2 days ago, haven't evaluated it yet)

# Future directions



# **OPALMS team members**

**Isabelle Bennett FEIT**

**Yvonne Davila Science**

**Sam Ferguson FEIT**

**Tom Frengos FEIT**

**Rosalie Goldsmith ALL team IML**

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**Sally Inchbold FEIT**

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# Any questions?

